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Kanyadaan – Woman: A Victim of Revenge

Abstract: This paper aims to portray the status of woman in modern India where mainstream patriarchy wants to prove itself using woman in the play *Kanyadaan* by Vijay Tendulkar. Irrespective of the class and caste to which a woman belongs she is an object, a tool and is abused and exploited. In the play *Kanyadaan* the upper caste patriarchy uses woman as a tool in order to experiment its political idealism whereas the lower caste patriarchy takes revenge on upper caste using woman. The unfortunate consequence of the above is the double hegemony of the woman by patriarchy – one by the father and twice by the husband.

Key Words: status of woman, objectification, caste revenge, patriarchal politics.

Societies of western countries are divided on the basis of class, whereas Indian society is divided on the basis of caste system. In India everything is based on caste. Important institutions like marriage are also based on caste system only. Castes are divided into categories – the upper and the lower caste. Brahmins and the Brahmanical custom followers are considered as upper caste and others as lower caste. Many institutes people, and isms attempted to eradicate this difference in caste in many ways. One of the important ways is marriage. Love marriage or inter-caste marriage is supported by people, like Basavanna in eliminating caste system. In India in such a circumstance a pertinent question that arises is, if a woman is asked her preference or choice in selection partner in marriage.

Like patriarchy casteism is also a kind of domination. In patriarchy men dominate and exploit women and in caste system upper caste dominates and exploits lower caste. In this case women are the sufferers. In either of the castes women are the victims of patriarchy. Women are the vehicles who carry the custom, tradition and culture. This vehicle is driven by the driver called man.

Socialism in India started along with Indian independence movement. In its beginning stage, it opposed colonial rule. Later it started to fight against upper class, upper caste and zamindari system. Democratic socialism or socialism believes in the democratic values like liberty, equality and solidarity.

Kanyadaan, a play by Vijay Tendulkar is about the failure of socialism and using women to experiment socialism and victimizing women for the revenge of lower caste. A happy socialist Brahmin family is shown in the beginning living in Pune. Nath Devlikar – member of state legislative council and socialist staunchly believes in the values of socialism, that is democracy. He always thinks of himself as a politician and socialist more than a father. Seva, wife of Nath Devlikar a social activist who works for the upliftment of the women, Jyothi, daughter of Nath and Seva, follows socialism in reality. Jai Prakash son of Nath and Seva pursuing post-

graduation in science lives in reality and does not believe in any ideologies. Arun Athavale, a scavenger by caste marries Jyothi and wants to take revenge on Brahmins because of his personal heinous experience in life and the generations of untouchables before him.

The play begins with the scene of a home where democratic values are followed practically. Both the children are given freedom. The wife is not just a home maker but an altruist who serves the society without financial gain. Freedom of speech prevails in the house. Jyothi daughter of the house has the freedom to select her life partner. She has selected Arun Athavale an untouchable as her life partner. She is supported by her father. Nath is excited as his daughter is exercising socialism practically. On the other hand Seva has motherly concern though she is a socialist by practice in society she does not like Jyothi's marriage with Arun Athavale. She enquires about his family and their economic background. Nath objects to the above and states there is no connection between marriage and family background. Seva is upset as she comes to know that in Arun's family he is the only earning member.

Jyothi is idealistic and wants to change the Indian scenario of caste system. She wants to tear the barrier of caste. She does not know whether she loves Arun or not, they meet each other in the socialist camp and both want to follow the tenets of socialism. Jyothi is innocent, she tells there is no music of violin in her heart, when she sees Arun but he proposed and she accepted his love as a cup of tea,

Nath: (...) no surge of intense feelings in your heart? (upon Jyothi's shaking her head.) no rainbow hewed notes played upon your nerves? (upon Jyothi's shaking her head.) no storm of hidden passions ... ? (she shakes her head again) Jyothi: I too am surprised. It was as if someone has asked, 'shall we have some tea?' after that I kept feeling that it was all my imagination. (*Kanyadaan* :507)

Arun comes to meet Jyothi's parents; he is uncomfortable in big houses. He feels big houses are as the stomach of snakes and crocodiles, where he feels lost and no connection between

people. He does not feel the warmth of the relationship in these kind of houses. It suggests he hates big houses and the people in these kind of houses. He starts to scold Jyothi simply and even he twists her hand. Enmity to the upper caste is in every atom of his body. His intention is to marry a Brahmin but not Jyothi. After hurting Jyothi he consoles her when Jyothi starts to laugh he says, “Hasli re Hasli ek Baamaneen phasli!...” (514)

He states the sufferings of an untouchable a scavenger, his father, grandfather and great grandfather. They used to roam miles together in barefoot, till the rag on their butt fell apart. They have to cry aloud, “Johaar, maayi – baap!” (513) because even their sight had polluted the purity of Brahmins. They used to eat the stale food and the flesh of the dead animals which made their mouth stink. This life of scavenger is quite opposite to the life of the unwrinkled ‘Tinopal world’, which is clean, white and fresh. So he asks Jyothi, will she be able to lead her life in a hut which is dirty? Can she be able to eat the spoilt dal and stinking bread? Can she be able to go to the toilet like his mother? He also says that there is a lot of difference between the idealistic socialists” service camp and the real life, which he leads. He openly says that he will beat his wife, like his father. When Seva asks him what he is going to do for livelihood after marriage, he answers in a rude way that he will brew illicit liquor, as the profit is more. If the woman is entertaining then the business will be on the top. He adds that even his children will have the job of cleaning the plates and cups.

After watching all the above incidents Seva, the mother and Jayaprakash the brother are totally against this marriage, but Nath an ideal politician and socialist is very happy. He does not think as a father. He says, ‘break the caste system’ was a mere slogan till now. Now his speeches are coming to reality, through the inter caste marriage of his daughter. He is breaking the called caste system in real sense. Like this his clothes have changed and he has become a new man. For a man in patriarchal society a daughter’s life is also an experiment. He says to Seva,

... society cannot be transformed through words alone. We have to act as catalysts in this transformation. He told social reformers did not stop with making speeches and writing articles on widow remarriage. Many of them actually married widows. Why did they do it...? that was also an experiment, a difficult experiment ... “ (524).

After marriage Jyothi is not happy with Arun. He has not taken any room for rent. They are leading their life in one or the other friend's room or house. Jyothi comes to her parents' house when she does not get any room to stay. She starts working in an office. Arun is still unemployed writing some poetry and stories. One day she comes home upset, Arun calls over phone, but Jyothi does not receive the call, so he comes home. Jyothi is not ready to go with him Arun pleads with her and apologizes for beating her. Jyothi tells her father that she doesn't want to go with Arun to which Nath responds as a socialist but not as a father. He does not care for Jyothi's suffering and does not support her. Instead he says that this experiment of their marriage should not go in vain.

Jyothi's sufferings increase day by day. She becomes pregnant. Arun becomes wilder day by day. Jyothi is admitted to the hospital due to his beating to her pregnant belly, when she is in her sixth month of pregnancy. Seva takes Jyothi to a hospital and admits her there. According to the doctor it is wounded and bleeding internally due to the beating. Jyothi is hurt both physically and psychologically. Seva invites Jyothi to her home, but Jyothi is not ready to go as she does not want further interference of her parents in her marriage. Seva comes to know through the neighbours of Jyothi about her daughter being beaten by Arun. They also tell her the loud name calling of Jyothi's Brahmin parents as mother Seva to be a pimp and father Nath to be a eunuch and him not being the true biological father.

Jayaprakash, Jyothi's brother is also hurt by seeing his sister's plight. He has been against the marriage of Jyothi and Arun from the beginning. He gives examples from history, how a

oppressed starts oppressing after getting freedom and takes revenge on oppressor. He compares caste revenge to the war between Israel and Palestine.

Jayaprakash : ... it says here that in the Middle East Israeli forces have launched a strong offensive against the guerillas. To stop the guerillas from getting water and food, as also aid and shelter, the Israeli forces have been razing the villages of Palestinian civilians. Not just the men folk but innocent women and children have been mowed down, monstrous violence has been unleashed upon them ... so it says here (546).

He gives another example for revenge from history which affected innocent women and children,

Jayaprakash : ... Hitler's Nazi troops had inhumanly decimated the Jews ... and today the Jews have become the murderers of Palestinian women and children ... just this, that those who were being massacred are now indulging in massacres. ... The oppressed are overjoyed when they get a chance to oppress others ... yesterday's victim is today's victimizer (547).

After Nath comes to know about the suffering and circumstances of Jyothi he is hurt. Arun writes his autobiography, after reading this book Nath's first response is ecstatic but later he says that Arun is a hypocrite. Arun invites Nath to chair a discussion session on the book, but Nath doesn't want to go and involve himself. For this Seva requests Nath to attend the session, because if Nath does not attend its after effects will affect Jyothi. So Nath attends the programme and talks positively. Jyothi listens to the talk and comes to meet Nath as a stranger and questions Nath why her father lied so much on stage. Nath becomes emotional and asks Jyothi to come back and stop suffering. For this Jyothi says in a pathetic way that now she is a married girl and married to a scavenger. So now she is a scavenger. Her entry into her father's

house has polluted the house. It is Nath who taught her to fight and never look back. So she doesn't want to return and show her back.

Conclusion

Jyothi has become the object of experiment for her father's ideals of socialism. Now he is a good politician because his words and actions are same. Arun is also happy because he is taking revenge on Brahmin Jyothi which is of generations. So what is the status of Jyothi, a daughter, a wife? Merely a woman without identity object for experiment and victim to a revenge. Like this woman has become the victim of patriarchy and caste revenge. Ambedkar says, "caste cannot be abolished by inter caste dinners or stray instances of inter caste marriages. Caste is a state of mind."

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